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# THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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In January, 1914, in a periodical entitled The American Schoolmaster, published by the Michigan State Normal College, Mr. Orland O. Norris, Assistant Professor of Ancient Languages in that institution, had a paper on The Social Argument for the Study of the Classics (pages 1–19). He begins by suggesting that men have failed to agree in their statements of the value of the Classics and their place in education because the values they looked for have been largely individual values,

> those that manifest themselves in the economic situation, in the adaptation of means to ends in the workaday sphere of the individual. The question has been, Does the student of the classics become a more efficient doctor, or lawyer, or engineer, or farmer, or mechanic, or business man? Does he become a more accurate, thorough, and learned mathematician, or chemist, or physicist, or biologist?

We must remember, however, continues Mr. Norris, that from the study of the Classics both individual and social values accrue; indeed, an individual value, that is an economic value as shown in efficiency or in profit, or in pleasure, is also a social value. Recently the individual has lost his place as the center and final object of attention in the educational field, as everywhere else. It is society that holds first place in our most dynamic modern philosophy, especially the ideal society of the near future, and the means of realizing this ideal society out of the materials of the actual and the present. The chief means of reconstituting the social order is everywhere admitted to be the training of the young.

Why, then, should the young be trained in the Classics? First, because, says Professor Norris (4),

> as a free, self-governing racial unit we are in constant need of suggestion and motivation to progress, and to a knowledge of the ways and means thereof; we need, so far as we may, to know the possible consequences of our social activities and adjustments, and to be able intelligently to advance, or retreat, or hold a middle course on any given line of endeavor.

In any connection, he continues (5), the civilization of the Greeks and the Romans is far more suggestive and instructive to us of America than the life of any other people, ancient or modern. Through the study of Greek and Latin literature we can see the experience of Greece and Rome over long periods of spontaneous development; Greek and Roman institutions are simple indeed compared with the economic interdependence of modern countries, "wherein every important social move is determined and shrouded by the clandestine considerations of interlinking diplomacy". The value of the study of Greek and Roman civilizations lies not in our direct borrowings, past or prospective, from that life (there would some day be an end to such borrowings and the value of the study would then cease), but in the fact that we can see social movements of those far off days with the utmost distinctness, we can see social causes at work and identify their results, and so gather neverendingly instructive lessons for our own guidance.

Our task, then, is to make the contact with matters Greek and Latin as directly as possible, with the least possible waste of time and effort (6).

Before we can do this, however, we must more clearly discern the necessity and the justification for the study of the Classics. This leads Professor Norris to discuss three principles of universal application, and therefore of supreme importance: the principle of mental contrast, the principle of genetic association, and the principle of human interest (7 ff.).

Every act of consciousness has as its prime condition and requisite a fact of contrast within the mental field. No fact can be perceived as such, and hence understood, that is not in perceived contrast with another; the clearness with which the fact itself is perceived is the definiteness of the contrast experienced. But in this world of myriad facts and possible perceptions it is impossible that there should be striking degrees of mutual contrast between all the facts experienced. It therefore becomes necessary on the one hand that the perceptual faculties be trained to the utmost sensitiveness, and on the other hand that the mind be stored with the greatest possible number of recorded perceptions in contrast with which any new fact may be perceived with the greatest distinctness, and the experience thus had made available as accurate knowledge.

Secondly (8):

> The intellectual movement represented by the evolutionistic philosophy has brought the modern world to assume in all matters of knowledge and knowing a position that, as a fact of general self-consciousness, is new in the history of man. This is the genetic viewpoint; and because we are all so thoroughly imbued with it, we no longer feel in our own hearts, or dare assert to others, that we know a fact or branch of knowledge, save as we know how it came to be; save as we see its present status in the light of its past development and ultimate genesis. So we note a growing tendency in all matters of scholarship to accept the genetic principle as a working basis; this appears more and more plainly in our textbooks, and is gradually sifting down into the lower grades of instruction.

Professor Norris notes that in all matters of observation and study there are two genetic series—"the objective and subjective, or natural and spiritual, or real and ideal, or factual and interpretative". To the former belong the observable and the observed facts, to the other belong all the human interpretations of the facts, from the rude guess of the savage to the latest scientific theory.

The library is quite as indispensable an adjunct of the laboratory as is the microscope, or any other apparatus, and is cumulative in importance. Original ability to observe finds its greatest source of quickening and direction in the ability patiently and critically to pore over the record of previous observation and interpretation. In these days the field of human experience is being so thoroughly canvassed that the only certain road to original achievement is by way of reading and criticism,—through the literature of the subject. The genetic principle is the natural principle of the organization of knowledge; it is only within the genetic series that mental contrast has real meaning. And this applies quite as truly to any fact within the interpretative as within the factual series.

The third principle, that of human interest, by implication involves, continues Professor Norris, the second genetic series (9).

. . . we are more deeply interested in our own species, race and family than in any other, and in the dynamic rather than in the static. That is to say, we are supremely interested in the application of energy to human achievement; or, in other words, man's supreme natural interest is the development and investment of human energy. The principles of contrast and genetic association are psychological, and apply to the intellect; the third principle is of the heart, and serves the individual as a compass on the voyage of life. It indicates the viewpoint which should consciously transcend all primary and secondary instruction. There is no such thing as knowledge for knowledge's sake, or art for art's sake. Any attempt to maintain such a theory in educational practice, if it does not actually wrench the individual from his racial moorings, at least allows him to drift at the whim of every passing current. But consciousness that all knowledge of the factual series, even tho apparently extra-human in scope, is racially motivated, and consciousness of the human energy that has gone into the upbuilding of the interpretative series,—due regard for these two elements makes all knowledge ethical.

To know a subject, then, for example mathematics or geology or biology, one must know its history in terms of human endeavor, how each new subject, each formula, and each new symbol even, came into being out of the pressure of practical human demands (10).

Capacity for knowledge, and therefore knowledge itself of every fact that man can experience, is a social, a racial, achievement; and any fact is most profitably learned and most clearly understood by association with the two processes of its own development and of man's hardly achieved knowledge of this development, as extended and corrected by criticism and reinterpretation.

C. K.

*(To be continued)*

## A QUESTION OF VALUES IN THE STUDY OF GREEK

At the beginning let me make it very clear that I am dealing distinctly and explicitly with the matter of the study of the Greek *language*, and with those other studies of Greek civilization for which some knowledge of the language is either indispensable, or in a very positive and real way helpful. I thus intentionally leave out of consideration all ways of studying and appropriating things Greek which do not require at least some knowledge of the language—in my judgment a large and very important field. I consider this distinction one of fundamental importance, and one which, moreover, classical teachers are too likely to overlook or disregard.

Let me assume that it is the ultimate desire of the teachers of Greek as well as of all other intelligent persons that the study of Greek, like that of chemistry or algebra, shall contribute as much as possible to the highest permanent welfare of the people of the United States. This platform would seem to be sufficiently liberal to command the assent and the approval of all who interest themselves in our educational welfare. Assuming now that we are dissatisfied with the present status of Greek, the question naturally arises, what are we going to do about it? What can be done, if anything, to increase the value of Greek in education here in the United States and thus to improve its present status?

The answer to this question is simply this: Study in every possible way (1) to increase the benefit, and (2) to decrease the cost of the study of Greek; and (3) to have Greek studied by the largest possible number of those for whom such study would be expedient. Give to the student the most and the best possible in the shortest practicable time; and make the entrance into Greek courses, especially College courses, as direct and unembarrassing as possible.

This general formula involves three subjects, in a measure distinct, yet closely interrelated: (1) the matter of emphasis, and of content or subject-matter in Greek courses; (2) the time problem, including the question of ways in which the cost to the student can be decreased; (3) the conditions of entrance to Greek courses, involving in particular the question of the articulation between High School and College courses, and also between elementary and advanced courses in College. In this paper I purpose to deal with the first of these questions only.

To get a definite starting point for my argument, let me assume the case of two groups of students, who, after finishing what we may call preparatory Greek, whether in School or College, are going to continue Greek in College, one group one year, and the other two years.

It is further assumed, very definitely and emphatically, that these students are not specializing in Greek and that they do not intend to teach Greek, but that they are taking Greek merely as one element in a liberal education, by which they are seeking to prepare them-